

Street News

Volume 11

Issue 2

2014

TURN YOUR PASSION INTO A CAREER PIXEL BLUE COLLEGE

DIPLOMA PROGRAMS

- 2D Character Animation
- 3D Animation & Modeling
- Aboriginal Graphic design
- Digital Audio Production
- Graphic Design

Empire Building
Suite 200 | 10080 Jasper Ave.
Edmonton, AB T5J 1V9
P: 780.756.3990
info@pixelblue.ca
pixelblue.ca
@PixelBlueFX

CLASSES START IN MARCH, APPLY TODAY

pixel blue

LOVE SURVIVES ON THE STREET

PAGES 8-9

Linda Dumont – Dale and Jackie are still together after nine years on the street

Canada

We acknowledge the financial support
of the Government of Canada
Periodical Fund of the Department of
Canadian Heritage

ALBERTA STREET NEWS

Volume 1, Issue 1, 2014

Alberta Street News is an independant
publication produced by volunteers and
sold by vendors on the street

Editor : Linda Dumont

Co-editor: Allan Sheppard

Writers: LByron Christopher, Allan Sheppard, Linda
Dumont, Timothy Wild, Andie W.L., John Zapantis,
Maria B., Robert Champion, Ryan Robertson, Judy
Brown, Angelique Branton

Photos: Linda Dumont, Byron Christopher, John
Zapantis, Allan Sheppard, Andie W.L. Theresa Walsh
Cooke

*Deadline for February issue – February 10, 2014.
Opinions expressed are those of the writers*

Alberta Street News
dumontlc@hotmail.com | 780 420-0805
9533-106A Avenue | Edmonton, Alberta | T5H 0S9
albertastreetnews.org



North
American
Street
Newspaper
Association

Alberta Street News is a member of
the North American Street Newspaper
Association and of the International
Network of Street Newspapers

Rule Of Law? Or Rule Of Men?

By Allan Sheppard

Some trust we have one, some fear
we are stuck with the other. The
truth is: we have both, and it isn't
always possible to know which is
which, who is which, or which is
who.

A personal blog post by Byron
Christopher (which he has kindly
agreed to let us reproduce in
full in this month's ASN) neatly
illustrates how and points to why
such confusion is common. When
criminal charges are dropped or
never laid by police and Crown
prosecutors against colleagues
and peers in criminal justice and
law enforcement, that confusion
is inevitable: precisely when
transparency and accountability
should be most clear. Christopher's
post deals with circumstances
following the death of Kyle Young,
16, just over 10 years ago. Young
fell through or (according to some
observers) was pushed through
an elevator door in the Edmonton
courthouse and plummeted five
floors to a grisly death. See Shafted,
elsewhere in this issue of ASN.

The Wikipedia entry for "rule of
law" begins with an ambiguity:
"Despite wide use by politicians,
judges and academics, the rule
of law has been described as 'an
exceedingly elusive notion' giving
rise to a 'rampant divergence of
understandings ... everyone is for
it but have contrasting convictions
about what it is.'" Still, Wikipedia
finds a reasonable definition in the

Oxford English Dictionary:

**"The authority and influence of
law in society, esp. when viewed
as a constraint on individual
and institutional behaviour;
(hence) the principle whereby
all members of a society
(including those in government)
are considered equally subject
to publicly disclosed legal codes
and processes."**

Another way of putting the same
ideas: "(J)ustice should not only be
done, but should manifestly and
undoubtedly be seen to be done."
(Seen to be Done: The Principle of
Open Justice,
tinyurl.com/n39dnyx)

According to "the functional view"
of the rule of law, "a society in
which government officers have a
great deal of discretion has a low
degree of 'rule of law,' whereas
a society in which government
officers have little discretion has a
high degree of "rule of law."

In contrast to the rule of law,
we have the rule of men (or, to be
gender-neutral, of individuals),
under which leaders, officials
and bureaucrats make decisions
at their discretion. Ideally, they
decide with integrity and a sense
of justice to and for all; but their
decisions often appear to lack
integrity or justice, and it would
be naïve of us to trust that what
appears to be true is not really
true. At best, the rule of individuals
can seem arbitrary; at worst it can

Street Vendor Heaven

An Alberta Street News vendor
was standing a little too close to the
curb, and got hit by a transit bus. He
found himself suddenly in heaven
standing on a cloud with a group
of other vendors. He looked around
for a washroom, and seeing none,
approached one of the others.
"Excuse me, sir, but can you tell me
where the washroom is? I arrived so
suddenly I didn't have time to go."

"Oh, we're pretty casual around
here," The man pointed to the edge
of the cloud, "We just let it go over
the edge." The vendor walked
over, and was just about to let
loose, when he glanced below and
saw another cloud crowded with
people. He jumped back. "Sir, there
are people down there!"

"Don't worry about them," the
other man replied, "They are the
ones who said, 'I'll get you on the
way out.' And never came back."

Some Home Remedies Really Work

My daughter was troubled with
a cold sore and bought a lot
of expensive medications that
were supposed to heal the sore.
They didn't seem to be effective. I
handed her my bottle of stress tabs
containing Vitamin B complex and
Vitamin C. The next day, the sore
was nearly healed.

When you sit on chewing gum and
end up with a wad on the butt of
your jeans, don't bother with ice to
try to get it out. Get out the peanut
butter and work it into the gum.
If the gum is really hardened and
set in, you may have to leave the
peanut butter on overnight. Wash
it out with warm water and soap.
Peanut butter also gets gum out
of your hair. Warning: if you are
allergic to peanuts, use almond
butter instead. It works, too!

seem vindictive. Always, it seems secretive. We are taught that the rule of law is characteristic of democracies, where we can be confident that "due process" will be followed; the rule of individuals is characteristic of dictatorships (think Stalin, Hitler, Mao, Pol Pot...), where laws are made and arbitrary justice dispensed by and at the whim of an individual leader and groups of rigidly controlled soldiers, police and other functionaries who enjoy special benefits and privileges. It ain't necessarily so.

The rule of privileged groups outranks the rule of law
There are many situations in our Canadian democracy in which law and justice are determined and dispensed by officials who have sometimes seemingly unlimited discretion over the procedures they follow and the decisions they make—situations in which the rule of individuals (or privileged groups of individuals) outranks the rule of law as we might like to believe exists in Canada.

The professional groups of physicians, lawyers, and engineers are familiar examples. Professional organizations decide who can and cannot become members. They govern the technical and ethical practices of their members, and rule on allegations of malpractice and misconduct. Such organizations operate under government charters that establish their authority. The argument seems to be that only a people familiar with the challenges and limits of a profession—in other words, a jury of true peers—is capable of giving an informed

decision. The assumption seems to be that professional discretion can and will be applied—appropriately, of course. Whatever the virtues of such an arrangement, it is hard for lay people not to believe that the process amounts to insiders judging insiders, with every reason to take care of their own, aware as they must be that they could face similar judgement and possible censure.

Professional charter privileges are jealously envied by other professions: teachers, for instance. Sadly (at least to them) Canadian teachers associations do not have professional charters so have must advocate for their members as unions. Also outside the charmed circle of professional charters, police and other law enforcement and corrections officers have had to advocate for themselves as unions, without the privilege of sitting and ruling discreetly on the performance and behaviour of members in quasi-judicial forums following internal rules and processes.

Nevertheless, what has not been delegated to them in law has often been granted in fact. Possible crimes and misconduct by police, law enforcement officers, and corrections officers seldom find their way into the public justice system. They are usually handled within their agencies or, in the case of the most serious incidents, by nominally independent tribunals, such as the Alberta Serious Incident Response Team (ASIRT), which releases reports, but otherwise operates behind closed doors.

Stakeholders and others who are not persuaded by the conclusions of such bodies have no access to the evidence used or the arguments considered, or to alternative measures. The most unsatisfactory of reasons—that charges were not laid or were dropped because there was no reasonable prospect of conviction—is often best we can get from such processes. Explanations are seldom given; and when they are, such explanations have to be taken at face value, because there is no way of knowing or evaluating any or all of the evidence used.

Judicial inquiries can punt the issues to the sidelines

In some cases, generally those that have political overtones or implications, governments punt the issues as far to the sidelines as possible by setting up a judicial inquiry, as in the Kyle Young affair, or by appointing a nominally independent special prosecutor, as in the case of my son, Darcy Allan Sheppard, who died five years ago in a confrontation on a Toronto street with a former attorney general of Ontario. If challenged on the outcome governments can and do deflect criticism by saying they appointed an independent inquiry or special prosecutor and the result was, inevitably and unarguably independent. Independent somehow translates as "correct," "fair," "just," "unimpeachable," even in the face of reason and logic.

In the Young case, charges were never laid. In my son's case, they were dropped, with an extended

but flawed explanation that cannot be challenged or appealed. Would a judge or a reputable defence lawyer acting as a special prosecutor ever be anything other than transparent, honest, and accountable? Maybe. Maybe not. But if even in only one case out of a hundred (or a thousand) such a privileged arbiter stepped out of line, surely the integrity of justice and the system of justice would suffer, as it arguably has in the Young case. As I believe it demonstrably has in my son's case.

Why do such things happen? And how?

F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote, in 1936, "Let me tell you about the very rich. They are different from you and me. They possess and enjoy early, and it does something to them, makes them soft where we are hard, and cynical where we are trustful, in a way that, unless you were born rich, it is very difficult to understand." tinyurl.com/qaexnoj

If we substitute "the powerful," "the privileged" or "the powerful and privileged" for "the rich" in that quotation, I believe we get a clear, concise, and precise statement of how allowing insiders to act and speak on our or our governments' behalf undermines the integrity of our judicial system and the rule of law—and of the individuals who act as insiders, possibly working for insiders against the public interest, which too often means the interests of the poor, the weak, and the disadvantaged.

SHAFTED

By Byron Christopher

January 2014 marks the tenth anniversary of a suspicious death — some allege homicide



Kyle Young was 16 years old

— at the Law Courts Building in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. 16-year-old Kyle Young, set to appear in Youth Court, plunged five floors down an empty elevator shaft after being pushed through a closed, one-piece metal door. No one was ever charged in connection with the youngster's death. A decade later, one concerned citizen still wonders why.

It was around 11:40 Thursday morning, the 22nd of January 2004 when I walked out the west doors of the Law Courts Building, known as the Courthouse, and spotted a firetruck, lights flashing, parked on the street. Possible news story, I thought. At the time, I was reporting from the Courthouse for 630-CHED Radio.

I approached a firefighter who was busy grabbing some rope, and asked what was going on. He glanced my way, cursed and slowly shook his head from side to side. The guy was some pissed off. But he wasn't angry at me; he was appalled at what he'd just seen in the bowels of the Courthouse. With a good length of rope draped over his shoulders, metal hooks jangling, the firefighter made his way to the Courthouse.

Unexplained Death

Word soon got out that a teen prisoner [in legal jargon, a "Young Offender"] had died violently at the Courthouse. I went around to the fourth floor on the Provincial side and noticed an unusually high number of guards milling about Courtroom 444 [Youth Court]. There sure was no welcome mat. The officers looked tense, their eyes shouting what their lips feared to say: Get Lost. The explanation we reporters got initially from the Alberta Government was that a Young Offender had somehow fallen down an empty elevator shaft. "How the hell did that happen?" I asked a PR person. "Aren't there doors to prevent that?" His explanation was that an investigation was underway and everything would come out in the wash. We were hoping not a whitewash. More often than not, when reporters are trying to cover a story the bureaucrats are covering their asses.

In an interview from Vancouver, Ryan Wilson, VP of the well-known elevator manufacturer, ThyssenKrupp, discounted any possibility the doors had opened prematurely before the elevator car

arrived. "It is basically impossible for those doors to come off or to open prematurely when there is no elevator there," Wilson told the Edmonton Sun. "Elevator doors just don't open. They just don't. Engineering-wise it is just impossible for that to happen."

The firefighter used his rope to secure a damaged elevator door, hanging precariously off one of the cables and in danger of plummeting down the shaft. Five stories down was the still body of a teenage boy, suspended in the air, his neck wedged in a metal bracket. Kyle Young was handcuffed and shackled at the waist. His feet, in chains also, were about a meter off the concrete floor. When I saw police photographs of the dead teen hanging in mid-air — handcuffed and chained — I realized why the firefighter had been so angry.

Edmonton Police showed up, but not right away. That's because no one notified them about the suspicious death — for at least half an hour.

Breaking News

The death of a teenager at the Law

SHAFTED



Edmonton Law courts building

Courts Building soon morphed into a national news story, with reporters scurrying about, looking for fresh angles. The competition was on. Day One went to the Edmonton Sun for first making public the name of the Young Offender. Its competitor, the Edmonton Journal, followed the next day with the boy's name.

Day Two belonged to CHED Radio. Our newsroom had received a tip that a teen who'd been in a holding cell nearest the elevator door, just around the corner, had heard [but not seen] everything. The morning after Kyle's death, I found the youngster outside a courtroom on the fourth floor. He was sitting with his mother. I asked her, "May I speak with your boy about what happened yesterday?" She looked at him and said, "It's your choice, son." The lad nodded yes. At that point, a court-appointed lawyer intervened and told the kid not to say anything. That was my cue to ask both the youngster and his mother to come to my office, a couple of floors down, where we'd talk. And so off we went.

Tony Blais of the Sun, with whom I shared the office, couldn't help but overhear the interview. He asked, "Can I jump in on this?" I said, "Sure." The teen revealed there had been a lot of loud banging, and when the elevator door broke free, he said, his cell shook. I asked him if he had heard any screams, and he said no. Strange. A youngster had plunged five floors to his death, and one would think he would've been yelling something. I mean, how tough was this guy? I know if I had fallen that far, I sure would have screamed. Unless I was unconscious. A video camera was aimed directly at the elevator door, but no tape ever surfaced. Guards claimed the camera wasn't set up to record. However, the youngster said that immediately after the incident, he witnessed guards

hurriedly carting away recording equipment. I couldn't help but wonder if everything had in fact been recorded — and the evidence subsequently destroyed.

At the inquiry that followed months later, two Courthouse guards [now known as Sheriffs] admitted pushing the youngster up against the elevator door, but maintained they were only trying to restrain him because he'd allegedly been verbally abusive and threatening. One guard even testified that Young asked to be bruised. The elevator door suddenly swung open, the guards said, and down the lad fell. Strange,

they didn't think to hold onto him. In any case, that was their version of events. Kyle Young of course never got to give his side of the story.

The Lone Protestor

Not only the firefighter was disgusted. A commercial pilot, 56-year-old Rob Wells of Edmonton, protested on the Courthouse steps, walking back and forth and holding a sign that read: 'Justice for Kyle ... [No] abuse cover up' and 'No More Brutality.' The other side read, 'Stop Killing Kids.' Wells recalled that when word finally came out — five months later — there would be no charges, "My gut feeling said there's something wrong here. It

just stunk." Wells felt strongly that Kyle's death was not an accident.

Rob Wells' Protest Placard

The northeast entrance of the Courthouse is a busy place with hundreds of people coming and going every day. Some had words with Wells, but most walked right by him. The one-man 'demo' grabbed the attention of somebody at the Courthouse. According to Wells, a guard shoved him and ordered him off the bottom step because he was "trespassing." "I believe it [the Courthouse] is a public place and I have a right to protest," Wells responded. It was the Nobel prize-winning author, Isaac Singer, who wrote, "What a strange power there is in clothing." Wells made the same discovery when he protesting at the Courthouse. When he wore plain clothes, people asked if he was Kyle's father. But when he wore a suit and tie, they wanted to know he was Kyle's lawyer.

Crown Prosecutor Stan-Fowler

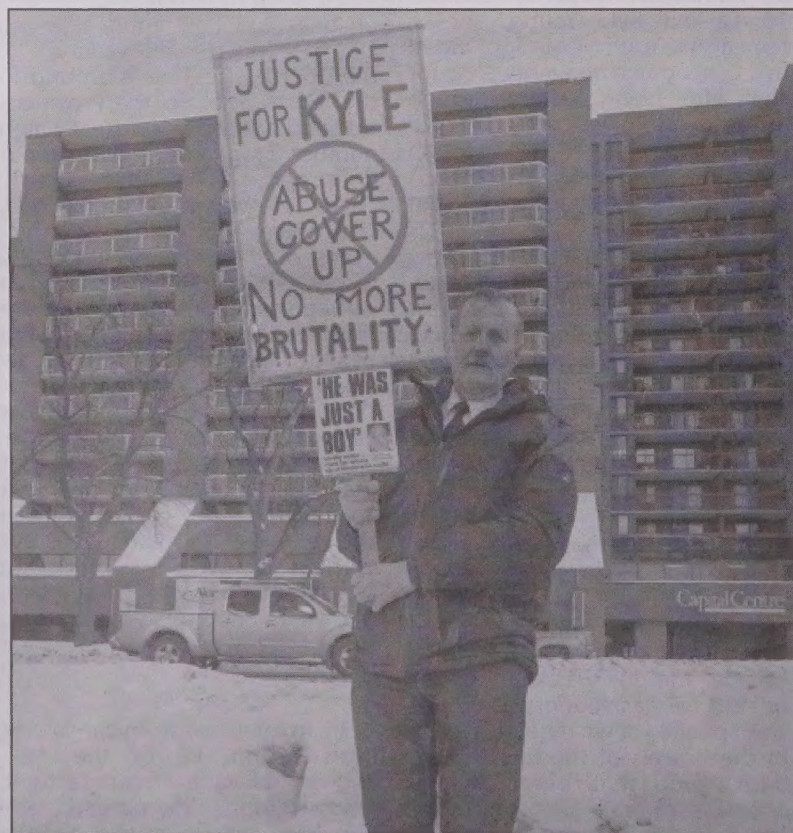
Scores of Crown Prosecutors also walked up those Courthouse steps, but only one — the late Stan Fowler — took the time to hear Wells out. According to Wells, Fowler told him, "This makes me ashamed to be part of the system." Fowler, who had studied for the priesthood, later told me that what happened to Kyle Young was wrong. Stan was a thoughtful, gentle human being and a good friend of mine. I liked him because he had more passion for fair play and justice than legal technicalities. Stan died from brain cancer on January 6, 2012. He was 68. Many lawyers and judges showed up for Stan's funeral service at St. Joseph's Basilica in downtown Edmonton. Sitting alone at the back of the church was Mr. Courthouse Protestor. I wasn't aware that Rob Wells had been friends or acquaintances with Stan. When I asked why he was at the funeral, Wells simply replied, "Stan Fowler was a man of integrity."

The Interview With Wells

In the summer of 2004 I interviewed Rob Wells about why he felt the way he did about the death of someone — in this case, a troubled teenager — he didn't know. We chatted on the sidewalk on the east side of the Courthouse. Wells didn't hold back in saying he strongly believed there had been a cover-up — and a blatant one at that. He summed things up this way: "I will never be convinced that Kyle Young's death was anything but a homicide."

The Threat

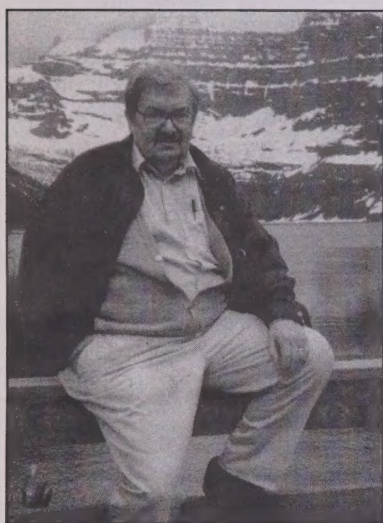
A 'bombshell' hit while I was talking to Wells. A guard, clearly agitated with the protestor, walked up to him and made a gesture that could be best described as a death threat. The officer raised his hand in the air, then dropped it suddenly, complete with sound effects ... as if to mimic someone, say, plunging down a shaft.



Rob Wells with Protest Sign

Photo by Byron Christopheher

CONTINUED



Stan Fowler

A week before, the same guard told Wells, "Don't you have a job? I'll take you for an elevator ride... kids are no fun anymore."

"The threat showed the mindset of people in the system," Wells surmised. The day after my news broadcast on CHED Radio, both Wells and the mother of Kyle Young got a phone call — and an apology — from the Provincial Solicitor-General. Wells was then called in to a meeting with the Head of the guards at the Courthouse, with Wells requesting that the guard not be suspended or fired. I was also called to a meeting with the official and expressed the same sentiment. The supervisor revealed the guard had fessed up to making both threats. I give the guard credit for being honest. The guy could have had a "convenient memory lapse" [lawyer-speak for lying through one's teeth], but he came clean. The guard remained on duty. When he and I met again, at the Courthouse, we shook hands.

The Inquiry

An inquiry, held months after the mysterious death, raised more questions than answers. An official with ThyssenKrupp Elevator testified that an inspection of the elevator a month prior showed that everything was in perfect order — and that the metal safety

pin which prevented the door from opening was not only in place, but in good shape. When police investigators finally showed up that day, the sheared-off metal safety pin was nowhere to be found. What happened to that important piece of evidence? Because of the pressure that had been applied to the elevator door, the metal bracket at the top of the door was bent at a right angle. Critics said this was clearly not the case of someone gently pushing on the door... the kid had become a human battering ram. The damage to the door flew in the face of statements by Edmonton Police Service Sergeant Chris Hayden who said his investigators "looked at the doors and they did not see any visible damage." It also came out at the inquiry that several hours had passed before Edmonton Police detectives interrogated the two guards. By then, the pair had received legal advice in a fast-tracked meeting at the Courthouse. Based on an investigation by the Edmonton Police, the Crown's office in Calgary decided there was "insufficient evidence" to charge anyone in connection with the death of Kyle Young. Could Kyle have rammed the door open on his own, with the two guards doing nothing to stop him? Not likely, according to his mother, Lorena Young. During breaks in the hearing, the distraught woman pointed out that her son weighed 123 pounds [55.9 kilograms], and that because he was both handcuffed and shackled, he was also restricted in how much force he could exert. Mrs. Young admitted her son was no angel, "But he did not deserve to die the way he died, so violently. No way. Not shackled like some big-time criminal, hand to foot and down an elevator shaft. He was just a boy."

According to Mrs. Young, her son had spent six months in jail for car theft and was living with her and completing a high-school course at home. A second teenage boy, who had been held in a cell next to Kyle's outside Courtroom 444, testified at the inquiry that two security officers had gone inside Young's cell. He said one grabbed the shackled teen by the back of

the neck, pushed him out the cell and pinned him up against a wall. "They would push him up against the wall," the youngster recalled, "then sort of pull him back and then push him again." He added that Kyle didn't appear to be fighting back and kept saying, "All I want is some food, man."

Kyle Young was what many would call a "little shit." It came out at the inquiry that he had spat in the face of a female guard just days before he died. One reporter wondered out loud, "Could it be the kid was just being 'tuned in' by guards and things got out of hand ...?" An autopsy revealed that Young's head had been cut, the result of it striking a protruding bolt more than a meter straight away on the inside of the elevator shaft. That meant that when the elevator door broke free from its restraints, Young had been flying horizontally. He'd become a missile.

In what could have passed as a scene from a Monty Python movie, a guard sitting at a desk nearby testified he hadn't noticed or heard anything... because he was busy reading the Criminal Code of Canada. Things got really quirky when another guard revealed he had discovered "problems" with the elevator door [it kept coming loose], and had outlined his concerns in a memo, which he produced at the inquiry. It became known as the 'phantom memo' since nothing had been said about it at the time of the boy's death. As well, nothing was ever done about the problems the guard had allegedly pointed out.

Hang on. If the memo wasn't a fake and the elevator door was coming loose from its hinges now and then, why wasn't this potentially fatal problem taken care of lickety-split? And if the door was so unsafe, why were two burly guards shoving a boy up against it? From time to time, I pulled aside Courthouse guards to see if they could shed light as to what happened that day. Their responses could be summed up this way: "Wish I could tell you more, Byron, but I can't. Sorry."

The Result

The inquiry, headed by Judge Jerry

LeGrandeur, cleared the guards of any wrongdoing, concluding they had not used excessive force. The way LeGrandeur saw it, the elevator door gave way and swung inward like a closet door, suddenly popping off its track, because of a mechanical problem with the door. In the end, no one faced charges.

Tom Engel, lawyer for the family, told reporters:

"Significant force was used to remove Kyle Young from the cells, take him to the elevator and push/propel him against the elevator door. Either Kyle died of the excessive force or died as a result of a defective elevator or a combination of both and it can't be none of the above."

The lawyer concluded, "Somebody had to be responsible."

Chris Chambers, one of the guards involved in the suspicious death, remained on the job at the Courthouse. Ali Fayad, the other officer, quit his job at the Law Courts Building and joined the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. He was then posted to Fort McMurray.

Wells maintains his belief that charges should have been laid. vRob Wells said that at 7 p.m. on Wednesday evening, 22nd of January 2014 he would return to the Law Courts building for a candlelight vigil to remember Kyle Young. "Hopefully Kyle's death is not forgotten and such institutional abuse is not repeated," he says. "I also hope that changes have been made in how Courthouse guards are selected."

The vigil was to be held on the west side of the Law Courts Building.

This article originally appeared on Byron Christopher's blog at byronchristopher.org. Christopher has been a journalist in Edmonton for more than 30 years and says of journalism "I've always been drawn to the ideals of journalism. In my view, that is far more important than news releases or so-called drive-by reporting. Screw that. Journalism plays a hugely important role in a democracy. Why? In order to make informed choices, people need facts and balanced, verifiable information."

Call for Board Members

Alberta Street News wants you in 2014! If you are interested in playing an active volunteer role in the publication of Alberta's street newspaper and working with other committed board members to hone or expand your skills in the areas of public relations, advertising sales, writing, fundraising, client support or partnership development, please contact us.

Please e-mail Jim Gurnett at jimgurnett@yahoo.ca or Eric Rice at eric.rice@shaw.ca to learn more about expectations and roles.

Colonialism and Cops

The Real Homeless Problem

By Daniel Morley Johnson

The following article is based on the author's presentation at the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness conference in Ottawa, October 28-30, 2013. A complete version of this and other presentations can be found at:

www.caeh.ca/conference-2014/caeh13/

Readers of the Edmonton Journal on July 26, 2013 might be forgiven if they thought the headline was announcing a new Hollywood blockbuster: "Hobo cop' helps ticket distracted drivers." It sounds like a feel-good story about a former transient turned traffic cop. The man in the photograph is holding a cardboard sign, and he reminds me of the homeless Vietnam veterans you see asking for spare change in cities like Dallas and Kansas City. Except this man with the ball cap and sunglasses has a sneer that I've never seen on the face of a panhandler; he's leering at the drivers with no obvious indication of humility or grace that accompanies begging for spare change and receiving people's leftover restaurant meals. This fellow is holding a sign that reads, "Hello, I am a police officer, if you are on your cell phone right now, you are about to get a ticket." This officer "netted 22 distracted-driving tickets" during a sting operation in July of this year. The Journal refers to this as "the fake homeless man strategy."

Last September, CBC reported that an Edmonton police officer who shot and killed 17-year-old Indigenous youth Cyrus Green in 2011 was now under investigation for allegedly beating a low level drug dealer. A fellow officer brought the accusations forward but claims he was ignored by his superiors and bullied by his peers. Hobo cop makes me feel a little ill when I think of the four Indigenous men shot by police – three of whom were killed – in three separate incidents in Alberta in the month of August 2013 alone. And where was hobo cop in 2005 during what is widely known as the "sweatbox incident" when three Edmonton police officers drove nine homeless people, most of whom were Indigenous, around the city in an overcrowded police van for hours on a hot day, one person had to urinate on the floor of the van, before dropping them off in the far north end of the city, hours by foot from their camps on the south side. A prominent Indigenous leader referred to this incident as Edmonton's version of the starlight tour. So yes, I'm offended by the "fake homeless

man strategy." It's part of a discourse on homelessness and economic poverty in Edmonton that largely fails to look at systemic colonial processes at the root of homelessness.

It is clear that government policies have for decades worked to systematically displace Indigenous peoples from their lands: the reserve system, the residential school system, and the Indian Act are just three examples. In Edmonton, a treaty band was dismantled and their reserve sold off in the 1880s and 1890s as a result of the work of prominent local businessmen (headed by Frank Oliver), politicians, and other members of a local citizens group. Edmonton is built on settler-colonialism, and our discourse about homelessness often is, too. The last Edmonton Homeless Count recorded 2,174 homeless citizens. Many front line workers believe this number is low. According to the 2012 Homeless Count, Aboriginal people made up 46% of Edmonton's homeless community, a number that has been increasing since 1999. The 2006 census identified 5% of the city's total population as Aboriginal. It is dangerous to frame this as an issue of over-representation, like Indigenous peoples are over-represented in the homeless or prison populations. The over-representation model implies that there is indeed some acceptable level of homelessness or incarceration.

In Edmonton, Indigenous peoples are home – even people who do not have houses are still emphatically at home.

How does our discourse reinforce and perpetuate homelessness? The Government of Alberta's plan to end homelessness in 10 years barely acknowledges Indigenous people: "As Alberta has grown, so has the scope of homelessness. It didn't occur overnight." Exactly. The growth of Alberta the province, established in 1905, has occurred at the expense of the Indigenous nations who have called the region home for thousands of years. Alberta the province is indeed built on the 'homelessness' of Indigenous peoples, through dispossession and disenfranchisement, removal and replacement. The provincial policy document individualizes homelessness, identifying factors like mental and physical illness or addictions and economic poverty as among the possible root causes. But what if the underlying factors are more systemic, like the invasion of settlers, broken treaties, the systematic displacement of Indigenous collectivities, racist/racialized laws like the Indian Act, and the occupation of treaty territories by non-Indigenous peoples? What if the underlying factor is us?

Sharene Razack of the University of Toronto has traced the intersections of geographic space, colonial violence, and the

legal system. Razack suggests that the violence enacted on Indigenous bodies throughout Canada's history is "a colonial violence that has not only enabled white settlers to secure the land but to come to know themselves as entitled to it." This colonial sense of entitlement enables "the nearly absolute geographical separation of the colonizer and colonized." Specifically, Razack identifies those spaces in colonial society that are created to contain what the white settler society deems undesirable. The inner-city is a particular kind of racialized space, "the zone in which all that is not respectable is contained." Laws maintain this racialized order. Historically, Indian agents used the pass system to keep Indigenous peoples on their reserves; presently in Edmonton, city police enforce this divide by employing the broken windows theory, a law enforcement policy that unjustly targets Indigenous homeless people.

According to Yasmin Jiwani, "the emphasis on policing certain groups of people and certain types of crimes is reflective of the social stratification system underpinning Canadian society." This social stratification racializes groups who are perceived as more likely to commit crimes, and creates policing practices and legal discourses that criminalize those who the dominant society views as disposable, for example, visible minorities, Indigenous peoples, sex workers, and homeless people. Jiwani writes: "While over-policing contributes to a greater scrutiny and criminalization of racialized peoples, under-protection renders the victims of crime within racialized groups more vulnerable." Therefore, in 2011, a year when 48 people were murdered in Edmonton, the Journal reported that more than 60 per cent of the people killed that year had been homeless or had used an inner-city shelter or social agency. More than a dozen of the killings happened downtown.

Robert J. Sampson of Harvard University and Stephen W. Raudenbush of the University of Michigan have pointed out that, in academic circles at least, the broken windows theory has more or less been discredited, supported as it is by implicit bias and culturally-based notions of how public spaces should be properly inhabited. These scholars have illustrated how the theory relies on an essentialist notion of disorder that stigmatizes both people and the places where they are located. They have convincingly shown that perceived neighbourhood disorder – or chaos – may not correlate with actual, observed disorder. Perceptions of disorder are shaped by a neighbourhood's racial, ethnic, and class composition, in fact, they found social structure and prior beliefs about class and ethnicity proved more influential than actual observed disorder. Among their conclusions, Sampson and Raudenbush maintain that fixing broken windows – cleaning streets and sidewalks, painting over graffiti,

reducing public drinking, and discouraging panhandling – may have little effect because particular neighbourhoods will continue to be stigmatized based on the historically durable racialization of space.

Too often policy and practice are not informed by evidence-based research. If there is any hope in "ending homelessness" it will surely rest in a critical decolonizing approach that (1) acknowledges the historical and ongoing realities of settler-colonialism here in Alberta, (2) emphasizes and amplifies the voices and concerns of economically marginalized/homeless people, and (3) questions laws and

policing strategies that are rooted in colonial segregation and racial profiling that all too often results in police harassing people for minor infractions or worse, killing them.

Daniel Morley Johnson is a front-line worker in Edmonton's inner-city and former lecturer in Native Studies at the University of Alberta and Maskwacis Cultural College. His writing has appeared in *The Globe and Mail* and numerous scholarly publications. He is a PhD candidate at the University of Alberta.

Free Meals In Red Deer

Barahcah Place

4611-50 Avenue

Lunch – 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. Monday to Friday

Loaves and Fishes

6002-54 Avenue

403 347-1844

Supper – 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday

Potter's Hands,

4935-51 Street

403 309-4246

Breakfast – 6:00 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. Monday to Friday

9:00 to 11:00 a.m. Saturday

Lunch – 11:30 to 1:00 p.m. Monday

Supper – 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. Tuesday

Seventh Day Adventist Church

5014 – 49 Street

403 341-4470

Supper 4:30 to 5:30 p.m.

Thursday and Saturday



Beautiful Hymns

Sent in by Judy Brown

The world has been given some beautiful hymns which express the heart cry and prayers of God's people. Two that I would like to share with you are:

Dear Lord Forgive (Written by C. Maude Battersby)

If I have wounded any soul today
If I have caused one foot to go astray
If I have walked in my own wilful way
Dear Lord forgive.

Forgive the sins I have confessed to You
Forgive the secret sins I do not see
O guide me, love me and my keeper be
Dear Lord, Amen.

Jesus, You are My Life (Written by Steve Fry)

You are my life, oh Precious Christ
You are to me, the Pearl of greatest price.
Your love for me will never die.
Jesus, You are my life.

I come to You, I run to You.
There's no greater joy than knowing You.
Oh, Holy Fire, loves purest light
Burn all desires, till You are my one delight.
Your love for me, will never die.
Jesus, You are my life.

I come to You, I run to You.
There's no greater joy than knowing You.
Conquering King, conquer my heart
And make of me a pleasing gift to God.
Your love for me will never die.
Jesus, You are my life.

Comic



Meals & Food Resources in Calgary			
Drop-In Centre 1, 4th Avenue SE All clients of The DI may access meal services. Meals and snacks are provided at no charge to anyone in need. Food service is offered on the 2nd Floor daily, 365 days a year. Clients who are unable to attend regular meal service due to work or school commitments, or other verifiable appointments can receive a bagged lunch. Bagged lunches can be arranged by request to any staff person, or through the Day Office located on the 2nd Floor: Meal Schedules Breakfast - 7:00 a.m. Snack - 9:30 a.m. Lunch - 12:00 p.m. Snack-3:30 p.m. Dinner- 6:00 p.m Center of Hope 420_9th Avenue SE Free for clients Open to public for small charge Breakfast: \$2.50 Lunch: \$3.00 Dinner: \$4.50 Emergency Meals (24 & Under) EXIT Community Outreach 117-7th Avenue SW, Calgary 403-262-9953 Sunday 1 :00 pm -5:00p.m.	Emergency Meals - Youth EXIT Youth Shelter 11216 Ave NE, Calgary 7 days/week - 4:00 pm - 9:00 p.m. Community Supports Streetlight - Youth for Christ Parks at 10th ave & 1 st Street SE Monday & Thursday Emergency Meals Alex Community Health Centre Unit 101,1318 Centre Street NE 403-266-2622 Thursdays Only -10:30 a.m. Food Bank Calgary Inter-Faith Food Bank 403-253-2055 Food Hamper NeighbourLink Calgary 403-209-1930 Food Bank Calgary Inter-Faith Food Bank 403-253-2059 Food Bank Calgary Poppy Fund and Veterans Food Bank Monday - Friday 10:00 am - 3:00 pm	Food Bank Muslim Families Network Society: Halal Food 403-466-6367 www.MuslimFamiliesNetwork.com Food Hamper St. Edmund's Anglican Church 8336-34th Ave NW Monday & Thursday 09:00 am - 12:00 Noon Community Meals Inn from the Cold 403-263-8384 Emergency Food CUPS (Calgary Urban Project Society) 128-7th Avenue SE Food Hamper & Meals Feed the Hungry, St. Mary's Cathedral Sunday Dinner 3:30 pm - 5:00 p.m. Meals on the street outside City Hall Calgary Street Church Monday - 6:00pm, Wednesday 11:00a.m. Friday - 6:00pm Sunday, 1:00 p.m.	

LOVE SURVIVES ON THE STREET

Dale and Jackie's Story

By Linda Dumont

Love has a way of transcending obstacles, enduring through the most difficult times, and even surviving periods of separation. For Dale and Jackie it has meant overcoming the challenges of Jackie's mental illness compounded by drug addiction and long periods of hospitalization. Dale can measure the cost by counting the number of times they have been homeless, but there has never been a time when he could just walk away.

Dale: "In the past nine years, many times the landlord would say, 'You can stay but Jackie has to go.' That didn't work for me - I've been looking after Jackie for so long I wouldn't know what to do without her." Dale was working at the overnight warming centre across from B's diner run by Pastor Pam from the Strathcona Baptist Church in 2004. Jackie was homeless at the time, and Snowman, a street friend, brought her over to Dale's place on 99 Street and introduced them. They hit it off right away. But Jackie was quite strung out and she needed her medication.

Dale: "I couldn't believe what I was seeing, and what I was hearing. That the mental health act would



let Jackie just run around on the street homeless." As the evening progressed, Jackie's behaviour started to escalate. Dale called the crisis team; they came, assessed the situation and left saying everything was ok and she could stay there. After they left, however, Jackie started tearing the place apart, then went out into the parking lot in her pyjamas. Not knowing what else to do because he didn't know her family or her

doctor, Dale called the crisis team again, and they came with police squad cars and sirens. Jackie was handcuffed and taken to Alberta Hospital for psychiatric patients.

Jackie: "I was pretty messed up. I was doing crystal meth and went a little crazy. Jackie was in the hospital for six months, and on lock down the first three months of her stay.. She had been diagnosed with drug induced schizophrenia at the age of 23, but she believes she

started having symptoms as early as 15 years of age, symptoms that were masked by the use of street drugs. When Jackie was finally released, the couple re-united, but Dale had been evicted so they had no place to live. Dale and Jackie moved into a tent behind Route 99 on the south side. They were there for about three months and the winter set in. Dale: "It got really cold, I got frostbite. I wound up in the hospital. I was there for months.

THEIR STORIES



Darin Charlet

Vendor Features: Darin Charlet

By Eric Rice

Darin Charlet was born in Edmonton in 1966, and grew up around Clarke Stadium. He used to go to football games with the Eskimos when he was young, and still enjoys watching them. He went to Alex Taylor Elementary School for some of his early grades. That school, one of the first in Edmonton, was closed by Edmonton Public Schools in 2001 and now is the head office of E4C, a non-profit organization dedicated to the alleviation of poverty. He made it through school up to Grade 9 or 10. After that he worked as a casual labourer for close to 20 years before health problems forced him to quit. He has arthritis and has vision loss. He can still work, he says, but not full time. He has been on welfare for close to 10 years, and has seen

the rates rise barely enough to keep up with costs. He panhandled for 7 years or so, and with that and odd jobs like distributing free newspapers like 24 Hours and selling Alberta Street News he has been able to support himself. He lived with his mother for many years before circumstance forced him out on his own. Panhandling, he says, is nothing like selling Alberta Street News. People were downright nasty to him sometimes when he was panhandling. Selling the paper is ten times better, and he gets accorded respect by the people who pass him by.

People, he says, stop and talk to him now, and some of them from his regular post by Scotia Place are getting to know him. He estimates that more than half of the people passing by acknowledge him now, whereas only 1 in 5 would even look at him when he was panhandling.

The money he makes from selling the paper lets him buy food that he likes, and lets him pay the occasional extra bill. He still has family in the city. One brother who runs a restaurant, and a mother who lives at Alberta Beach and is doing okay despite a hard life.



I lost my finger - because the of infection they had to amputate, and they took away my prosthetic leg because it no longer fit."

Jackie: "While Dale was in the hospital I was on the street, in stair wells, running around everywhere. Sometimes Mike (a friend) would let me sleep at his place. I would curl up and sleep on a chair."

Dale: "I had expensive clothes, \$100 dollar shirts and ties, and she was pawning them off at Route 99 for food, Jackie: I had nothing. I went to ADAC one day but ran into a guy and we smoked some hoot so I was back on drugs. I didn't really want it - I should have got some food instead." When Dale got out of the hospital they wound up at Westmount and set up a tent. Jackie has family near there so they could drop in and see them. Dale was in a wheel chair at the time, waiting for a new prosthetic leg. After that, they moved to the south side and were sleeping in a parkade. Jackie: We called it the Pigeon Coop. It was near the university hospital. There are six or seven levels in the car port. At times there would be people on the different levels. People would bring us blankets and food. A lady brought take out food. I think they felt sorry for me. I think they thought we were pretty cute as a couple. Dale: I wound up panhandling." Dale and Jackie also lived in a series of suites and apartments, but each time they were evicted after two or three months. Between residences, they lived in tents, crashed with friends,

or lived in motels for a week or two at a time. Sometimes Jackie disappeared for a days, and Dale called the police to locate her. She was hospitalized numerous times. Jackie was on medical injections for schizophrenia, and the health nurse would come to where-ever the couple was staying, whether in a tent, at a friends, in a suite, or out on the street. When camping, they avoided the city centre because it was too easy for Jackie to fall in with the wrong people and to start using again. They also avoided using the shelters in the downtown core for the same reason, and because there are no shelters where couples can be together.

Dale: We would get evicted because Jackie would get talking to her voices, and yelling at

them. She wasn't always doing her medications. People would be talking to her and she would be talking to her voices and they thought she was telling them off. A lot of it was behaviour problems, not following the rules and regulations and not showing respect for other tenants. Sometimes things would escalate between us and them." When Dale was not home, Jackie sometimes went door to door begging for a cigarette or a lighter. She also forgot things, and sometimes fell asleep while cooking. One night when they were crashed with friends, she got up in the middle of the night to cook Ramen noodles, and fell asleep. The noodles burnt black, filling the suite with smoke, and turning the stovetop dark brown. They were

out the next day. At another place, Jackie left the kitchen tap running, and flooded not only their suite, but the one below them. They were out the next day...

Dale: We would get another suite and after two or three months, we would be evicted. I didn't know what to write on applications anymore with all those evictions."

Finally, however, Dale was able to get housing with the help of the social workers at the Boyle Street Community Services. To do so, they both had to use the shelter for three months. Jackie: When we went to the shelter, they would throw me in the snake pit" (the area used for those who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs) Dale is currently living at one of The Mustard Seed residences. Jackie was hospitalized again, and while there, a placement was found for her in housing for persons with disabilities. There they help her with the cooking and cleaning, and medication is administered daily by staff.

For now, both have housing and are in from the cold, but it's far from ideal. They can't spend the night together. Dale visits Jackie every day, but he has to leave at 11 p.m. The same goes for Jackie when she visits Dale - she has to be out by 11 p.m. The couple is hopeful that a placement can be found where they can live together, where Jackie can receive the extra help she requires to keep her healthy.



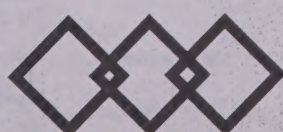
He's proud of his mother and her abilities to cope, and talks to her on the phone a couple times every day. He's glad for what he has, and what he gets, and takes his life day by day to see what it will bring. Darin says he believes in Jesus, and has even asked the occasional favour. Some of them he thinks were granted, but it's hard to know for sure. After talking with Darin, I set the phone down and went about my day. I was prepared to think of him as someone who was a bit unfortunate, maybe had some health problems, didn't get the lucky breaks that others had gotten, and had let the difficulties of his life keep him from realizing his potential. He was obviously a smart guy, with a good sense of humour, and maybe could have made a good career for himself somewhere.

After all, isn't that how we all think about people we see on the street, that they could have probably "made it" in some way, and been successful and self-supporting if only they had tried a bit harder or had a bit more support? About 15 minutes after our initial interview Darin phoned me back. He'd neglected a detail that he wanted

to tell me about his life. He was struck by a car on the street when he was a child and suffered multiple broken bones and injuries to his head that left him half-blind.

After the accident he was taken to hospital, where he remained in a coma for three long months. His mother never knew if he was going to come out of it or not, but came to sit by his bed nonetheless. When he came back to consciousness three months later his body was damaged irrevocably and his life was changed forever. He wonders sometimes at the reason. Why was he struck down, why didn't he die, why was he brought back?

There is no way for us to answer those questions, but we can, perhaps if we try, learn not to judge quite so quickly.



SUPPORT ALBERTA STREET NEWS

You can help in the following ways:

- I want to to subscribe to Alberta Street News. Please find enclosed pnclosed payment of \$30 for a 1 year subscription.
- I want to make a donation towards publication costs. Please find enclosed my donation of \$_____
- I want to help someone to reperesent ASN at the International Network of Street Papers conference in July. I want to donate \$_____
- I want to donate Air Miles points towards air fair to the conference in Glasgow, Scotland in 2014

For more information about ASN, Call Managing Editor
Linda Dumont at 780-428-0805

Please pay by money order or cheque.

Payments can be made out to Edmonton Street News Society
9533-106 A Avenue Edmonton AB T5H 0S9

Homeless Man Writes a Blog

By Linda Dumont

Instead of a bottle in his backpack, Johnny Lee carries a laptop that he uses to keep up with his blog on which he shares his everyday view of life from a homeless perspective. Lee says, "I have been homeless on and off for nearly 15 years. I am now homeless since March, 2013 – the longest I have ever been homeless at one time."

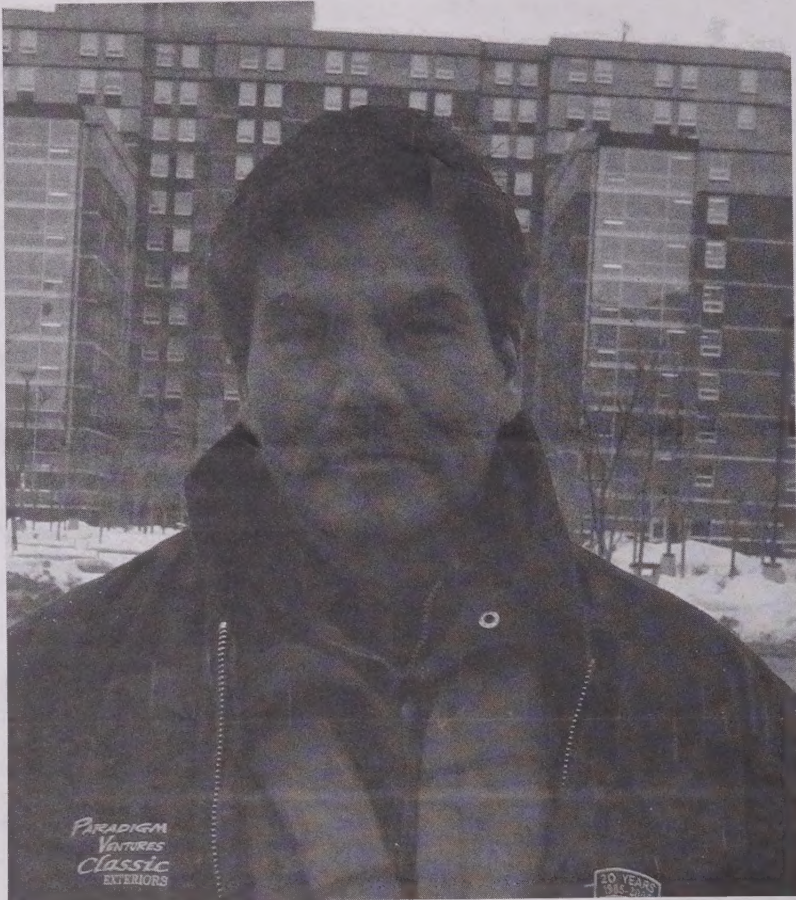
Lee uses the Milnar Library to plug in his lap top to connect with the internet. He says, "That's the only way I can get the stories from my lap top onto my blog."

He also plugs in his lap top at the drop-ins he frequents during the day time.

"I love God and I see things from a broken perspective – the whole world is broken as well. Everyone is the same – homeless or not. The world is very materialistic with not enough sharing and caring," he said.

Lee graduated from high school, the first ever for his family, and even enrolled in college for a brief period of time. He had to drop out as it was too soon after rehab for addictions but he is now clean and sober. His mother's family is from Drift Pile, Alberta, and his dad from Buck Lake, but he has uncles at Hobbema. He was raised with his parents where he was exposed to alcohol because they were both alcoholics. Lee started doing cocaine 16 years ago and wound up on the street. His sister had started dating a dealer and he began working for him which then led to using as well.

Lee says the homeless life suits him for now. "Most times I like the freedom. With street people you know what to expect. They are caring and loving but you can't trust them" He said in the "real world;



Johnny Lee

Photo by Linda Dumont

you tend to trust those around you and are surprised when they stab you in the back but on the street your guard is up all the time. Lee sleeps at the Hope Mission every night and says it's OK except that it is hard to sleep right through the night. The mats are so close they are touching, so he may get hit with an arm, and the guys next to him wake him up when they roll over or go to the washroom. He eats at the Hope Mission, the Bissell Centre and The Mustard Seed. His usual routine is to stay at the Bissell Centre until 10 to 10:30 when they

serve lunch, then go to the library or to the Boyle Street Community Services. Lee said, "I took a creative writing course at the library and I just joined the Men's Choir. We sang Christmas songs. I also enjoy singing with Inner Voice at The Rock every Thursday evening at 7 p.m. We sing positive songs, not too many religious but with good vibes. They want to go to the prisons to sing." Lee has no money from government assistance; instead he works casual labour. The work he is able to do is limited by his bad knee and his bad back from his 16 years

spent roofing. He has been trying to find easier work, but has no experiences, and has received no replies to his applications. "I think it may be time to concentrate on my writing. I'm thinking of going back to school to study English and Theology. I want to write a book about my experience with drug dealing and everything else," Lee said.

After speaking with Alberta Street News, Lee joined up as a vendor and he is selling papers outside the Milnar Library downtown.

From Johnny Lee's blog

"I am so happy, I have made it to day 10 without smoking, I have also checked into some singing lessons to aide with the two, count them 2 singing groups I have joined... not counting the Christmas choir I'm a part of for my church. I am a part of then Downtown Men's Choir which will be performing at the Downtown libraries main entrance at 1pm. Christmas eve. I am also with the Inner Voice group which is new and needs more men to join, Everyone is welcome but HEY! I need more guys to help me out. It's mostly women right now which normally I would not complain but they're mostly all married!! come on you SINGLE women... you really need to get out more and join singing groups, particularly ones that I am apart of... just a suggestion by the way, you may also find me standing outside the downtown library from time to time selling the "Alberta Street News". I do this to put my Blog-site address in them and promote my stories... smart eh? well... it helps to put change in my pocket as well. Anyway that's enough for now. God bless you all luv ya!" Johnny Lee

To read more go to johnnyleeluvJesus.blogspot.ca

Resources in Edmonton

SOMETHING TO EAT...

HOURS VARY - CALL 211 FOR MORE INFORMATION

Bissell Centre - daily sandwiches	780-423-2285 ext.140
Robert Tegler Friendship Room (adults only)	10527 96 Street
Boyle St. Community Services - daily lunch	780-424-4106
10116 105 Avenue	
Edmonton's Food Bank - food hampers (must call)	780-425-4190
Hope Mission	780-422-2018
9908 106 Avenue	
Marian Centre - daily lunch	780-424-3544
10528 98 Street	
McCauley Seniors Drop In (55+)	780-408-2970
9526 106 Avenue	
Mustard Seed - evening meals	780-426-5600
10635 96 Street	
Salvation Army - food hampers	
9620 101A Avenue (drop in)	780-424-9222
1241 Hyndman Road (by appointment)	780-472-6743

SOMEWHERE TO SLEEP...

FOR WOMEN

Women's Emergency Accommodation 780-423-5302
9611 101A Avenue

FOR MEN

Herb Jamieson Centre 780-429-3470
10014 105A Avenue
Salvation Army Short-Term Residence 780-429-4274
9611 102 Avenue

FOR WOMEN & MEN

George Spady Centre (intoxicated) 780-424-8335
10015 105A Avenue
Hope Mission 780-422-2018
9908 106 Avenue
YMCA Downtown Housing (small fee) 780-421-9622
10030 102A Avenue

FOR YOUTH

Hope Mission Youth Shelter 780-422-2018
9908 106 Avenue
Youth Empowerment and Support Services - Shelter 780-468-7070
9310 82 Avenue

SOMEONE TO TALK TO...

24-HOUR CRISIS LINES

Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-387-5437
Crisis Support Centre Distress Line 780-482-4357
Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868
Seniors' Abuse Helpline 780-454-8888
Sexual Assault Crisis Line 780-423-4121

IMMIGRATION SERVICES

Catholic Social Services 780-424-3545
10709 105 Street
Changing Together - A Centre for Immigrant Women 780-421-0175
3rd Floor, 10010 105 Street
Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers 780-424-7709
11713 82 Street

COUNSELLING SERVICES (NO-FEE/SLIDING SCALE)

City of Edmonton 780-496-4777
Assessment and Short-term Counselling
The Family Centre 780-424-5580
Urban Counselling Network 780-424-4106 ext.272



Bill Cunningham

by Joseph Fredrich

Bill Cunningham holds a paper on which he has pasted the photographs of four children, after Joseph Fredrich gave Bill a donation in the amount of what Fredrich would have spent on the children. Fredrich, the children's uncle, met Bill when he first came to Edmonton, talked to him on the street where he was selling the Alberta Street News, liked him and decided to start helping him out a bit financially when he could afford it. For the Christmas season, after discussing it with their father, James, they agreed it would be nice if Fredrich gave what her would have spent on the kids to someone who didn't have all the advantages the kids have.

HOMELESSNESS MARATHON

5PM - 7AM
NATIONAL
RADIOTHRON

FEB 26TH
RAISING
AWARENESS



TUNE IN TO CJSR 88.5FM

CONTACT ROSHINI @
MARATHON@CJSR.COM

VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
CJSRNEWS.COM/HOMELESS

CALL IN DURING THE MARATHON TOLL-FREE AT 1-866-594-7729

Our House

By Timothy Wild, Calgary

Ninety years ago, in 1924, the Labour Party, under the leadership of James Ramsey MacDonald, assumed power for the first time in the United Kingdom. There were a lot of expectations (both good and bad) of the political direction of the new administration – some hoped for much needed, transformative social and economic change to improve the conditions and life chances of the working classes, while others feared the very same thing. However, expectations aside, the promise of radical change was limited by legislative brakes imposed upon the agenda of the first Labour Administration. The Conservative party remained the largest grouping in the House of Commons, and Labour was in a minority position, able to govern only with the tenuous help of the amorphous Liberal Party. That being the case, there were very real limits on the ability of Labour to implement many elements of their manifesto, particularly in terms of their domestic policies. Given their minority position, the government subsequently lost a vote on a matter related to the pressing of sedition charges against the editor of a communist newspaper, and Ramsay MacDonald dissolved parliament. Labour lost the general

election later that year to the Conservatives and Stanley Baldwin.

However, although Labour was only in power for a mere ten months, there were some successes in terms of foreign policy, as can be seen in the development of Anglo-French and Anglo-Soviet relations. There were also advances related to the provision of affordable housing, a crucial need for the working classes. John Wheatley, a member of the Independent Labour Party from Glasgow, and Minister of Health, introduced the Housing (Financial Provisions) Act, 1924 which provided subsidies to builders of council houses (the source of social housing for many working class families), and ultimately resulted in over 500,000 public housing units being built. In addition, as noted by the British historian Henry Pelling, this also “had a stimulating effect on the economy” – all in all a good thing.

But why is this important to Alberta in 2014? Well, as mentioned, affordable housing is indeed a critical need for members of the working classes. In order to be truly able to afford the annual rental costs of a two bedroom apartment in Calgary, a person or family would need an income of \$46,000. Given low wage rates, the feminization of poverty, increasing income disparity and

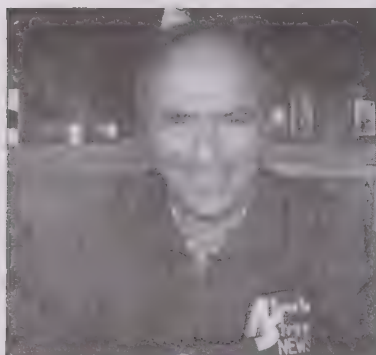
inadequate social assistance supports, not everyone can pay the so-called “market rate” for their housing. In fact, one in five Calgary households are overspending on housing. Therefore, there has to be an adequate supply of affordable units along the larger housing continuum to help people meet their basic shelter costs. To be sure, bricks and mortar are essential.

Yet, to my mind, what is even more important from the lesson of the first Labour Government is the simple fact that it shows that an adequate supply of affordable housing can only occur when there is long-term, sustainable and meaningful government intervention, either in terms of the provision of actual capital to build the housing or to support the building of units by other players through the active and intentional use of public policy instruments. The Wheatley Act, together with the later work of another giant of the Labour Party, Nye Bevan, reflects the capital provision approach. Government provides funds to actually build the affordable housing. At a policy level, government can also have an impact on the supply of affordable housing by making it easier for people to obtain financing for such housing to help create somewhat of a market case (such as with the Canada Mortgage and Housing

Corporation) or by providing incentives for private and not-for-profit investment and innovation in affordable housing. Either way, it is essential that government be involved in creating an adequate supply of affordable housing as the private sector operating by itself has proven unable to deal with complex social issues, the supply of housing included. We need to keep this basic fact in mind.

When it comes right down to it, then, the supply of affordable housing supported by government intervention is one of the most effective anti-poverty measures there is. Sure, it must be used in conjunction with a raft of other poverty reduction measures, but adequate, affordable and safe housing is essential for a person's sense of security and social inclusion. It also helps compensate somewhat for low incomes, which would be particularly beneficial for working class women and their families. As noted in the document From Words to Action: Alberta can afford a real poverty reduction strategy “affordable shelter is by far the biggest cost for low and modest income Albertans”. To help meet the costs of shelter, we sorely need ongoing government intervention and leadership in the housing market.

THE PARANORMAL



UFO's And How I Found God On Highway Two

By John Zapantis

The paranormal is an interesting and entertaining topic. It leaves people without answers while trying to unravel the origins of its questionable mysteries.

I'm one in particular who is often baffled by this phenomenon. While growing up as a young boy in Edmonton, supernatural comedy sitcoms like *I Dream of Jeannie*, *Bewitched*, *Lost In Space* and *My Favorite Martian*, where creatively entertaining and humorous, when I'd run to escape from the everyday realities of loads of homework after school. Watching characters like Samantha the witch from the comedy *Bewitched*, twitching her nose and making objects disappear and reappear quite often had me thinking, What if kids from my school, with claims of actual witches, UFO's and the paranormal and other types of spiritual powers, did exist? What then? Would I one day find that out my own personal experiences to be a testament of that truth?

At this point in my life all I wanted to believe was nothing in reality came anywhere close to the supernatural powers of Samantha the witch. Little did I know what unexpected realities would later await me in the years to come that would one day have me believing that the paranormal and other spiritual powers were alive and

well on this very planet we live on. My first actual run in with the unknown took place in the summer of July, 1971. While my parents where at work, it was the summer holidays for both my sister Dora and I. I was 15 at that time and she was 11. During a hot summer morning in July of 1971, we were both sound asleep in our bedrooms, sleeping in as usual because of the summer break from school.

While asleep in my bedroom, experienced a rather eerie dream in which a catholic nun appeared, dressed in a traditional Roman Catholic habit, holding a silvery looking burning cross and singing in a rather high pitched operatic soprano vocal, holding that high note that remained at that same level of sound. I quickly awakened from my sleep. I found the dream quite disturbing. I quickly jumped out of my bed, feeling the goose bumps growing on my back. I'd gone into a cold sweat. I walked quickly towards our apartment hallway that separated both my bedroom and my sister's bedroom adjacent from one another. When I headed into the hallway,

coming out of her sleep, my sister Dora greeted me. She had her head slouched down and was struggling to get the word out.

Sounding drowsy, she asked me, "Did you hear a nun singing?" All I could feel now was the chill as my body shook like a nervous squirrel, so I tried to make sense of all of this. Playing back the strange dream of a Catholic nun singing like a soprano while holding that silvery burning cross, I replied, "You heard what I was dreaming." Just thinking about the eerie impact this strange dream had on me, kept me fully awake, without the need of splashing cold water on my face to help start my day. Imagine that, my sister was actually tuned into my dream and could hear that nun singing in my dream.

Years later, I brought up a discussion about that paranormal dream with my sister, but for some strange reason, she couldn't recall that paranormal experience. To this day, there is no logical explanation for why this happened the way it did.

To be continued in the ASN March issue.

I Remember The St. Louis Hotel

Part 2



By Andie W.L.

As I continue to walk in the area heading down towards Inglewood, there is the feeling of a small ghost town just on the end of the Cal-de-sac to 5th St SE. After being a 21 year past patron and being very familiar from frequenting the many east end hotels, I can actually feel the bad spirit element. They are very much alive in the rustling, frosted leaves and the remnants that are still left on the branches from each new season throughout the year. I have seen on a regular basis, the black-capped chickadees, flocks of house sparrows, common ravens, black-billed magpies, and small flocks of red-breasted nuthatches, (Birds Calgary, Year Round Birds), flying from the branch to branch in the trees. In the stillness, with no-one else strolling by, in the moment, I am the only one there. These small feathered creatures today are

often chased away, while feeding and looking for food, by the bad spirit element.

The bad spirits are in this domain and they do remain and can be waiting on a branch or perch when the wind begins to blow. From time to time, the spirits feed off the crowds in the under belly of the area today.

I can sometimes get spooked remembering there has been in the past a cold and chilly wind that has blown the dark grey clouds, across the night sky. As the moonlight moved across the outer layers of the storm clouds, the wind continued to blow against the moonlight moving behind the grey outline of the heavy storm clouds. Through the area today there is sometimes a light fog moving across the low energy lights. I have often felt a presence and turned around and watched out for my surroundings using my street smarts. Almost every time I go through the avenue there is a haunting feeling. It is as if the people of the past, including those who have passed on and whom I knew as acquaintances, were standing next to me in spirit. I could be walking in the morning, afternoon or the early evening with the rustling sound of frosted dead leaves swirling and blowing along the sidewalk and the road. I can almost hear the bar fights and the groupies, the crowds from the sub cultures back in those days.

This is an unbelievable presence to witness. I was able to share it

while walking with another writer in early 2000, who wrote a book, about her life on the 7th Avenue Strip in the 1970's. I told her about my experience in the presence of the moment and she could feel what I was talking about. This was because in the past she had spent time in the area and her memories were vivid as well.

This is a powerful poignant experience that is still within me whenever I walk in the area. Sometimes, all of a sudden, I'll be overwhelmed with the memory of the past bar scene while walking next to the St. Louis Hotel. I remember the past sights with the dark lurking shadows moving on their perches on the city owned tree branches. I have a bone chilling memory, with adrenaline running through me, of the fear and violence; then the wind suddenly begins to blow behind me, like I am being asked to hurry on to safer ground. By now, I'm already moving as fast as I can out of that eerie area. The past bad spirits are forever going to be present there: they are the generations of the past and present, moving shadows against the walls of the old St. Louis Hotel and the other turn of the century structures across the street.

There is forever going to be the under belly world in the area and it is not going away. The society class will always be there to some degree once the St. Louis Hotel area is revitalized and rebuilt with an East Village New Age

Community.

Walking in the moment of what I hear, feel or see really doesn't have an effect on me, and I believe that I'm not going to be harmed in any way. I didn't run with any of the street sub-culture bar groups. The St. Louis Hotel was let go, in disrepair, unkempt and there was no up keep to the hotel rooms and attached businesses; only minor repairs. The down trodden had been living there for decades.

I believe that if the area eventually has better lighting, neighborhood block watch and affordable housing, life will be breathed back into the area. It will reduce the ghost town effect and work to eliminating the abandonment of residents and encourage the public to feel free to walk in the area.

I don't know if the Cal-de-sac will ever be able to adapt to the change in the area and how the new developers want to bring in their class of business owners. I think they will have to have a good neighbor policy committee to work with the community supports that help the homeless and street residents and businesses in the area. The developers who are eventually going to build on the north side of the block to where the St Louis Hotel stands will eventually be turning the soil to replace the sidewalks with the new cobbled, classy structures like they have done walking east on the next block. There will be high end coffee shops and restaurants!

Freedom of Rights?

By Angelique Branston

Freedom of rights is something that most people take for granted in Canada. Being born as Canadians, most were raised secure in the knowledge that as long as they did not infringe upon someone else, they could live their lives as they chose. Unfortunately there are many people, even in Canada that know no such freedom. They were born into a life of restrictions and rules, where it was safer to try not to think too hard and just do what was demanded of them, whether it is because of a religious sect, an abusive controlling person, or poverty. Freedom is a fragile thing that can be taken away, or lost quickly.

I think it is good that the government wants to look into the religious sects we have in the country, but that we should be wary as to how much they can inspect, and what exactly they want to stop in these sects. As Canadians we have the right to choose whatever religion we want, as long as it does not harm others. The government and the enforcers of the law need to have clear boundaries on what they can/and can not do before they start their humanitarian inspections. Without an accountable democratic government, Canada is no better than the communism of China (which entered in under the guise of freedom, and equality for all). The reality in China is that many people have lost all of their freedoms, and live in poverty while a select few bask in freedom, and prosperity without accountability.

The people who live in poverty, constantly have their freedoms taken away, right down to the very

basics, they are told where to eat and drink. If they want the luxcery of eating at home as a family, or with friends, they must spend hours waiting to bring home a meagre amount of food received at the food bank. The food they receive at the food bank is handed to them, they can not choose the foods that they would like to eat. The result of this is there are also cans of food or breads that are given back to the food bank, traded, or simply thrown out. Pasta and bread is no good to one who can not consume gluten, not to mention any number of allergies. The poor are not allowed to have allergies.

If they go onto the Alberta Works program (welfare), they lose even more rights. They subject themselves to being told what they should be doing. If some letter or form needs to be filled out and handed in they are told that if they do not comply they will receive nothing for the next month, and will have to go through the arduous process of applying to the system again. Within Canada there are still many that for whatever reason do not live in the freedom of rights, and are even afraid of their own voices. I am finding my voice, after years of torture and abuse. It is a hard process, but I am glad that I have the freedom to learn to live again. I only wish that there were more people free to start this process. That is why I have a tattoo of a blue butterfly on my arm. It represents freedom to remind me to never take it for granted, that one day all Canadians can live in true freedom. I have heard it said that a country should be judged on how they treat their weakest, lowest members. Where would you judge Canada to be?

Poetry From Ryan Robertson



Ryan Robertson

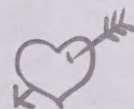
CONQUER

It is
Once again
The time
To celebrate
Valentine's Day—
We have been
Through a lot
You and I –
It all has
Not been easy
But together
We have made it – and with
Any luck
Another year
We can conquer —



A WARM HEART

It is time
Once again
To think
Of love
And those
Who make
Us happy –
Without you
The days
Are long
And uneventful
So please
Stay near
And keep
My heart warm
And make
Life worth living



SURVIVAL TOGETHER

As time
Goes on
I can't help
but wonder
what life
would be
without you
at my side –
the time's
have been tough
but together
we have survived
so thanks
for always being there –
and oh yes ---
I Love You!



Good Day To You:

My name is Rory Gaudon and I am a professional entertainer. I am a Story Teller, Poet and Comedian who uses musical inserts with a recorder. Last but not least, I am also a Balloon Artist. I can act as a strolling performer, entertain stationary, and will even busk, reshaping balloons for an appearance fee. I portray three completely different characters and love my work! I am pleased to announce recent updates to my web links. There is now a blog with illustrations from my "Rory Stories" called, "The Best Contest" and "The Gaugnomesky's."

www.mydwarfsworld.ca

www.rorygaudon.blogspot.com/

If you are interested in any of my characters and are considering hiring me, please contact me for information regarding my performance fees. You may contact me directly through my site.

Sincerely,
Rory "The Gnome, Leprechaun and Robotic Robognome"
Gaudon

Our Cry of Despair is Drowned Through Indifference



By Maria B.

It is not that people choose to ignore our cry for despair. The fact is that we are often walking around with unresolved core issues and beliefs that are keeping us in a state of despair. I have gone through many of these issues myself but through awareness, understanding and the willingness to change my core beliefs and the flow of my thoughts, I have been able to liberate myself from the strongholds of despair.

The triggers will never disappear because through the years they have become part of who we are, we have been introduced to them, now we are well aware of their existence and we are able to progressively minimize the impact they have in our life. This is not a contest, there is no rush. As long as we are taking small steps to improving ourselves and getting closer to what we want in our life, all is well.

No one can ever pretend that what we went through during our childhood miraculously is going to disappear and leave a clean slate. The fact is that when we were wounded, humiliated and degraded in so many ways, for every wound there is a scar that speaks loudly not about our weaknesses because we were children but of our strengths.

Any rule without understanding and made up to cause us fear about what was being asked from us, was not for our well being but their own well being. To my parents, it made them deal with their weaknesses through the power they used in the expectation of subservience. Their toxic criticisms, the rules and expectations were not suitable for a child to measure up to, therefore since a very young age, I was set to fail. Not just that but it became an ingrained feeling of badness in my being. I were bad because we failed to understand and consequently was unable to follow rules. It was not just my actions or lack of actions, suddenly I became a "bad being".

Try to grow up trying to make some sense of why you were considered such a bad being? It

becomes such an uphill battle. Even our achievements did not represent any success.

How can a children that has been created by God and inherited his divinity, on the sole opinion of their parents become "bad" and unworthy human beings? What is wrong with this?

What is wrong with this is not that we were bad beings but the fact that our parents put incredibly high standards that did not measure with what we were able to accomplish at our age. Their lack of knowledge of child development did not allow them to realize that children grow in different stages and are able to accomplish different things at different stages. Their crude and barbaric parenting styles allowed them to think that they own their children and those children were to obey without question and do what they were told; we became enslaved and toxified by their ignorance.

Everything that we needed in order to be able to develop into responsible and caring human beings were stripped from us and I feel that we were raised as if we were animals without feelings and without the capacity to think. As we grew up, our parents, friends and teachers kept telling us to follow the rules. If you broke a rule, you were bad. I'm not talking about robbing banks or stealing kittens, I'm talking about breaking the kind of rules that meant giving up exploration in order to learn. If you were raised in a household where physical, emotional and verbal abuse was the favorite menu to dehumanize you, you learned to live in fear, in a defensive state and blaming others for what is happening to you. I grew up feeling I did not belong and that I was not worthy. You are not only ashamed of what you do - you become ashamed of who you are, suddenly you become ashamed of being:

Ashamed of Being

You constantly feel that you are being scrutinized in everything that you do and the way you look and you are being judged in a way that makes you just want to disappear. You start disappearing by taking the sidelines in life, being chased by the fears, by the hopelessness that you start to feel dragging you down into a spiral of despair and isolation. The despair is so overwhelming that you just want to cease to exist and all this time you fail to realize that you are looking into the mirror of life where whatever you can see has become the reflection of who you think you are.

When we have adopted all the beliefs of our parents about ourselves and we have become our worst enemy, we do not need them to hate us anymore, now we

hate ourselves. The hate that we have developed for ourselves is so overwhelming it has blinded us to the point that we do not even see it or realize the injustice that we are doing to ourselves. Even being aware that when our parents abandoned us left us in a state of helplessness, fearfulness and very vulnerable, when we started to hate ourselves because our parents did not accept us, we took on their cause without questions and we also abandoned ourselves.

We abandoned ourselves in a time that we needed ourselves most. I do not understand how is possible that when life has become a dreary chore, to stop the suffering, we go ahead and create isolation becoming more distant to everyone. It is like drowning and covering our mouths at the same time. While common definitions of loneliness describe a state of solitude or being alone, in our case loneliness is a state of mind that causes us to feel empty, alone and most importantly "unwanted".

Emotional isolation

Emotional isolation is a state in which an individual is mentally distanced from other people. A person with this condition may appear numb and constantly seems to be pulling away from others. In addition to a lack of mental connection, emotionally isolated people tend to show little interest in the feelings of others as well. Many people suffering from this are only able to form superficial friendships. They lack trust and can not confide in others. They feel lonely and unable to relate to others as they feel they are failures. This condition is often preceded by or coincides with depression, anxiety, and feelings of inadequacy. They have enrolled in the kind of bad feelings that form a circle of despair.

When we start feeling isolated, we may have thoughts of not belonging or of feeling rejected by others. What we overlook, however, is that when we are alone, we are often in the company of our worst enemy- the one within ourselves. An isolated space is the perfect breeding ground for negative, self-critical thoughts. Our negative thought patterns creates an internalized enemy that leads our critical inner voice and serves as a self-destructive thought processes and behaviours. This inner critic feeds into our feelings of isolation, encouraging us to avoid others and remain in a lonely state. What we hear has become a familiar tape a steady stream of words/ insults putting us down. Putting ourselves down becomes woven into the fabric of our thoughts.

If the critic in us has taken the command it is because, we have allowed this by surrendering to our negative thoughts. We must take control of our negative thoughts in order to control them. One

of the best actions we can take to counteract the hopelessness we may feel is to think outside of ourselves. Believe beyond all doubt that you have something to offer. Even little acts of generosity can have a significant impact. Generosity, as a principle, can lead to stronger self-esteem, which then leads to more social behaviour.

The world needs you to do what you love. There are people out there waiting for you. I am here to remind you that you can do what you love. Sure, you might fail a few times along the way. You might not know what you want, but so what? You'll never live a fulfilling life without trying new things and facing your fears.

What's your definition of success? Have you even thought about it? Allowing others to define success in our lives could lead us on a path of unfulfilled expectations. When will you be successful? Who says you have to wait for anything? Why can't you be and feel successful right now!

My definition of success is finding who I am in the eyes of our creator and doing everything I can to become what God wants me to be. He want us to know that we are inherently worthy human beings that deserved to be treated with dignity and respect. In the eyes of the creator we are miracles, gifts to the world. Give love and be grateful! Whenever you care for others reflects life greatest value of yourself.

I have come to understand that no matter what changes you want to make in life, you have to fight for them and break through the hundreds of walls that come in the way of your true destiny. Promise yourself that you would do more with your life. Make your life mean something so that others would get value from it and benefit from your experiences so they can embrace the beauty of life and live it with passion.

Be the change you want to see in the world

Climb out of your despair and start living in a way that you can be an inspirational light for people struggling in the world. Honour who you are and leave a mark in the world through your incredible strength, love and compassion for others.



ROB'S CORNER



Robert Champion

Everyday Stuff

Get up around noon. Watch some day time television, not always but mostly. Selling papers has given me an independence, able to choose my own hours, mostly in the evenings by the old Plaza Theatre in Kensington now. Calgary, been selling street papers for a long time coming up on 20 years this June 2104. It's a natural for me to sell newspapers, I get along with people, enjoy being outdoors, make friends easily, also I enjoy writing and selling the paper helps with a little extra income each month. I'd rather be doing something than nothing. I ride my bicycle pretty much all year round, totally enjoy it and it's good exercise.

Take it Easy, Take it Slow

Slow down, reflect forward, look backward, see where you have been and try to see where you are going. Take it easy, try not to over stress yourself, life is short. Tomorrow is another day. The sun will rise like always and so will you. Good willing someday we will all get to where we were all meant to be, in a place of peace and tranquility, in a place where there is no more pain, nor any sickness, suffering or hunger. A place where we can travel anywhere we desire without having to purchase a ticket, without having to carry any baggage, in a place called heaven!!

Home Alone

Home alone, in spite of what people say -' you're not alone! I'm here, I feel it, the loneliness, the emptiness. 'I'm here for you' are other words I've heard, but don't take seriously because if I needed someone where would they be, if just to talk to. I'm not sure what that means, those words seem so empty—I'm here for you. If Lorna were still around, alive, those words 'I'm here for you' would mean something.

All Said and Done

When all is said and done it was a pretty good in 2013, made some new friends, made some good sales for the most part. 2013 was my 19th year selling a street paper, starting with the Spare Change newspaper back in June 1994. I was 43 yrs. of age, out mostly everyday riding my bicycle.

I Really Miss

Not having to come home to an empty apartment. Having someone to talk to when I'm at home or to talk to on the phone. The sounds of Lorna's voice. Sharing a meal with her. The smell of her perfume occasionally when she wore it. Watching TV with Lorna in a cozy apartment on a frigid winters night.

Rob's Say of the Day

You can't always get what you want. You can't always say what you feel. You can't always have what you desire. You can't always be totally honest with yourself and your friends. You can't always resist telling a lie. You can't always fight the pain of loneliness, sadness or emptiness, that's part of being human.

Rob's Last say of the Day

Wish to All the Very Best and Thanks. Wish all the readers and supporters of the Alberta Street News all the best in 2014. Thanks for your continued support of the Alberta Street News, much appreciated. Look forward to seeing you in 2014 and hopefully beyond.



Advertising Opportunity

If you would like to advertise with us for an ad this size contact:

JOHN GRUNDY
587.709.0360

**

Deadline for advertisements and
submissions for the nexy issue is February15, 2014

A RORY STORY

A Rory Story and Play Safe message from Carisa Hendrix



"Hello Ladies and Gentlemen one day in the fire kingdom, I was approached by Scary the first male Banshee who was seeking my wisdom.

MISSION

Edmonton Street News Society provides a voice, employment and social support to those who need these, and communications perspective dealing with poverty and social justice, by education and communication activities, including publishing a street newspaper.

Values/Beliefs/Guiding Principles

We believe in being inclusive and encouraging. We believe that human rights are fundamental to living together. We believe that everyone deserves the opportunity to earn and control their money. We believe in journalistic and organizational professionalism and integrity. We believe the public needs to know about the issues of poverty and social justice.

We value community and connecting with others. We value passion and determination. We believe everyone deserves the opportunity to learn, develop and use communication skills.



By Rory Gaudon

A talented young lady is a fire performer.

Over the years I have been Street Performing it is ironic that I perform as the characters I write about. There are many different types of performers and my friend Carisa Hendrix is a talented Fire Performer. She has traveled overseas and now is an International Performer Artist. Carisa even set a record in Ripley's Believe it or Not's, archives in Italy. This talented actress is a resident of Alberta, is not only an excellent entertainer, she also

employs buskers and other actors and actresses to work both with and for her. As a professional performer when showcasing fire acts, she ensures the audience that they do this for a living and are professionally trained, making sure the audience knows not to try these stunts at home.

If you would like to learn more about Carisa Hendrix. Please google search her name to learn about Carisa's numerous accomplishments over the several years that I have known her.



PETER GOLDRING
Member of Parliament
Edmonton East

THE WORK OF COWARDS

News reports last month told of Spozhmai, a 10-year-old Afghan girl who had been strapped into a suicide vest by her Taliban commander brother and ordered to blow herself up at a police checkpoint, but then had second thoughts about following through.

While they denied involvement, the Taliban has a history of recruiting children as young as eight to commit such acts – which truly speaks to their subhuman barbarity. To the Taliban babies and children are mere cannon fodder.

The use of children as instruments of revenge is despicable, the work of those too cowardly to fight their own battles. In Canada we have the much documented case of Omar Khadr, who is serving time in Edmonton after years of detention at the US-run prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. According to Article 38 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Khadr and others can be recruited at the age of 15, and indeed may volunteer even younger. Omar Khadr killed an American soldier and subsequently pleaded guilty when charged of the crime.

Certainly there is no doubt as to his being old enough to understand the right or wrong of his actions. If 10-year-old Spozhmai was able to choose not to blow herself up in a suicide attack at the behest of her brother and other family members, then should not Omar Khadr, who was almost 16 at the time of his 2002 arrest, have been able to make the same moral choice and not throw the grenade that killed American soldier Christopher Speer?

Those who strapped the explosives to Spozhmai and sent her out to kill have no morality. The same is true for those family members who trained Omar Khadr to kill. Spozhmai made the right choice. Omar Khadr could have too, but did not.

What do you think?

780-495-3261 www.petergoldring.ca